

In the Year Two Thousand and Twenty

Upon the recommendation of Councilor Michael Quinlan, Jr. and Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra.

R-20.051 A RESOLUTION
IN SUPPORT OF EXPANDED ABSENTEE VOTING AND VOTE BY MAIL

WHEREAS, voting is a fundamental right and a foundational principle of democracy.

WHEREAS, during the Covid-19 global pandemic a strategy that has proven effective for protecting communities by slowing the spread of the virus is the practice of social distancing and limiting congregating in groups.

WHEREAS, the Massachusetts state primary is September 1, 2020 and the general election is November 3, 2020 and it is unknown if at that time gathering in groups, which is necessary for voting at polls, will be permitted, advisable or if citizens will feel safe exercising their right with in-person voting.

WHEREAS, healthy ballot access is essential to our democratic process, and also to our community health and safety. Every voter in the Commonwealth should be able to exercise their right to vote safely, without fear and without putting their and other's health and the health of their community at risk.

WHEREAS, vote by mail is a proven voting method which has increased voter access and participation without vote loss or voter fraud. Currently, five states vote almost exclusively by mail: Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah and Washington. 28 states have "no excuse," or "no fault," mail or absentee balloting. In response to COVID-19, more states are converting upcoming elections to vote by mail to ensure healthy ballot access, including New York, New Hampshire and Maryland.

WHEREAS, Bills S.2654 in the State Senate and HD.5026 in the State House, "An Act establishing vote by mail in 2020," seeks to establish vote by mail in Massachusetts.

WHEREAS, for the September primary and November general elections, the Secretary of the Commonwealth has expanded eligibility for applying for absentee voting. H.4623, sponsored by Representative Paul Mark and Representative Lindsay Sabadosa, would further expand absentee voting to all that apply to vote absentee.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Northampton City Council asks the Massachusetts Legislature to act with urgency to pass H.4623 to allow absentee voting for all in the upcoming 2020 elections.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Northampton City Council asks the Legislature to pass Senate Bill 2654 and House Docket Bill 5026 to establish a vote by mail program in the Commonwealth for all future elections.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Administrative Assistant to the City Council shall cause a copy of this resolution to be sent to the state sponsors of the Act, Senator Rebecca L. Rausch and Representatives Adrian C Madaro; Chairs of the Joint Committee on Election Laws, Senator Barry R. Finegold and Representative John J. Lawn, Jr.; State Representative Lindsay Sabadosa; State Senator Jo Comerford; House Speaker Robert DeLeo; Senate President Karen Spilka and Governor Charles Baker.

